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10 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : USIB Support of Army Area Handbooks

REFERENCE : Col. Long's memo to Gen. Graham, dated 27 July 1973, Subject: Curtailment of Army Area Handbook Series

1. The suggestion that USIB consider funding the Army Area Handbook Series on a cost-sharing basis raises once more the question of the willingness of the intelligence community to provide basic intelligence. Its financial unwillingness to do so, together with denial of the need for basic intelligence, was implicit in the decision at the 19 July USIB meeting to terminate the NIS program. To pick up the Area Handbook contract now would amount to switching support from authoritative, coordinated, and classified NIS publications to background studies that profess to be nothing more than "operations research" and whose contents "do not represent the official view of the United States Government" (Handbook Foreword).
2. Any action on the part of USIB that would foster the replacement of the NIS by the Handbook might seem strange in light of the fact that the non-intelligence character of the Handbook has been its chief defense against the not infrequent charge of duplication with the NIS. Moreover, the proposition that the community might be willing to share the \$1.35 million Handbook contract is difficult to accept. No such consideration was given to D/BGI's "C2 option", which called for a reduced NIS program that would have provided authoritative basic intelligence more than equal in numerical coverage to the Handbook at a modest cost to the community of about \$2.0 million.
3. The argument does not imply that Area Handbooks are without merit. While their political and economic analysis tends to be shallow, relying heavily on the publications of the country concerned, and they make little attempt to assess national stability or military capabilities, their discussions of a country's historical background and culture are generally extensive and accurate. They also contain carefully compiled bibliographies.

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4. The DDI at the 19 July USIB meeting suggested that DIA might want to take over the contracts the NIS has carried with the Department of Commerce. Possibly the Area Handbooks should also be considered in this light. This suggestion, however, is directed toward satisfying departmental -- mostly Defense -- interests. Any more general USIB concern about basic intelligence would of necessity throw into question the wisdom of the decision to terminate the NIS.

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